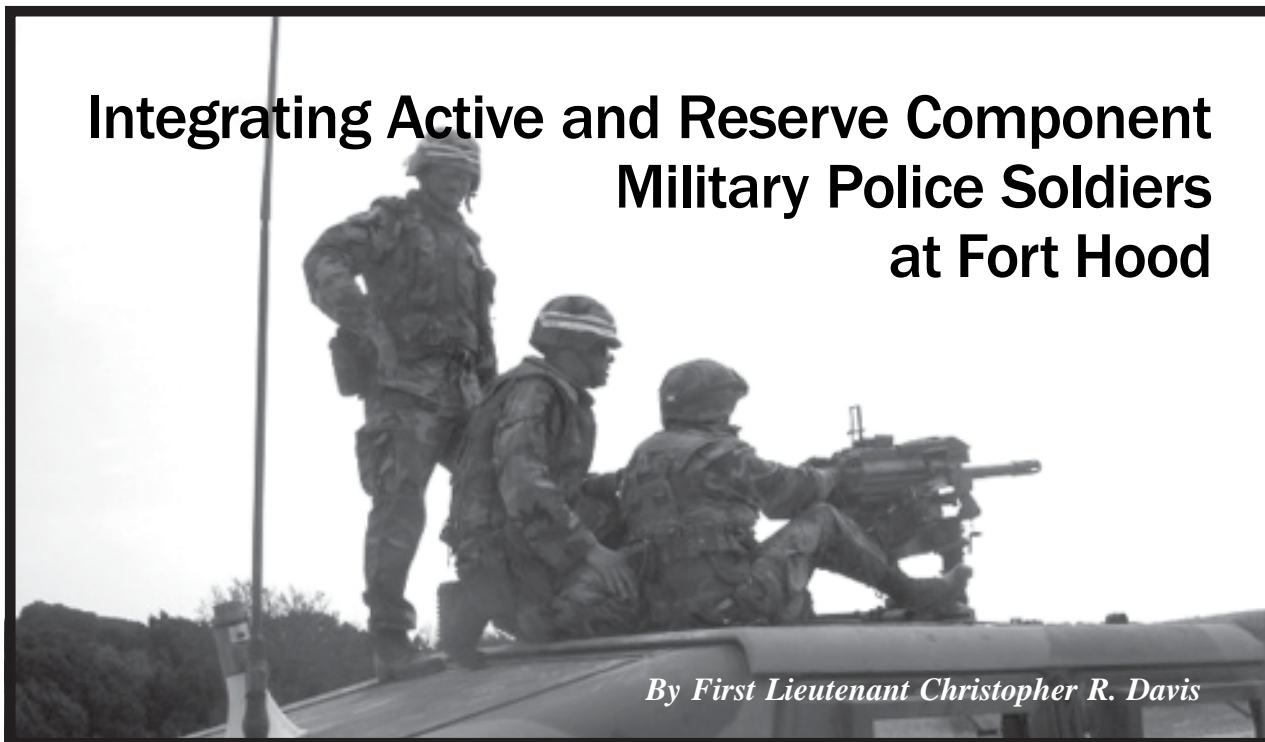


Integrating Active and Reserve Component Military Police Soldiers at Fort Hood



By First Lieutenant Christopher R. Davis

Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom have raised the operations tempo of the U.S. Army. With many Active Component (AC) soldiers deployed overseas, the Army turned to Reserve Component (RC) units to conduct force protection missions. In the case of Fort Hood, Texas, almost all of the AC military police units were deployed and replaced with RC military police units. So the question arose: Where should AC soldiers be assigned when they have a permanent change of station to Fort Hood? The commander of the 89th Military Police Brigade easily found the answer. In-processing soldiers were assigned to a deployed active duty unit and attached to the “War Eagles” of the 114th Military Police Company, Mississippi Army National Guard, mobilized at Fort Hood under the 89th.

History

The 114th Military Police Company was originally a combat engineer unit, but in the 1970s it was converted to a military police company. Based in Clinton, Mississippi, the company has two detachments—one in Canton and the other in Vicksburg—with its higher headquarters, the 112th Military Police Battalion, also based in Canton. The 114th proudly boasts that it is the most mobilized unit in the Mississippi Army National Guard. It received its first modern activation in 1991 during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. In 1995 and 1996, it was activated for Operation Joint

Endeavor and deployed to Mannheim/Heidelberg, Germany, for law enforcement support.

In December 2001, the War Eagles were again called to active duty, deploying to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and integrating with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). In early May 2002, the unit deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to conduct prisoner security at the detention facility. After five months, the unit returned to Fort Campbell and then home to Clinton, where it was demobilized.

In February 2003, the 114th was mobilized with orders to Fort Hood. Unlike previous alerts, nearly half of the unit’s soldiers were on duty supporting other missions—41 on volunteer duty for a state security mission and 10 deployed to the Middle East with its sister unit, the 113th Military Police Company. The 114th could mobilize only 76 soldiers.

Integration

When the 114th arrived at Fort Hood, the commander of the 89th Military Police Brigade promised to get the unit back to its full modified table of organization and equipment strength. He directed that, with few exceptions, all soldiers reporting to the 89th Military Police Brigade would be attached to the 114th. AC officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and enlisted soldiers worked side by side with 76 RC soldiers. The new AC soldiers wore the 89th Military Police Brigade patch and the 114th Military Police Company

unit crest. At last count, the War Eagles have an unprecedented integration of 50 percent AC and 50 percent RC soldiers in their ranks. This has created a positive meld and a great training opportunity.

Most of the AC personnel attached to the 114th are junior enlisted soldiers, and all of the unit's platoon leaders are AC. This mix has allowed the unit to build teams, squads, and platoons, thereby providing more opportunities for leadership roles. The RC officers and NCOs organic to the 114th come from a wide variety of civilian professions, providing a breadth of talent that has not been seen in AC units since the days of the active duty draft. At least 20 percent of the RC soldiers in the 114th are civilian law enforcement or corrections officers, each with 2 to 15 years of experience. As a result, little training was necessary before they assumed patrol duties on Fort Hood, the Army's most populous installation. AC soldiers who work alongside these RC military police have the advantage of working with mature and experienced partners.

But this integration did not come without difficulties. The first obstacle was encountered while in-processing personnel. Significant differences between AC and RC personnel and pay systems created some confusion, but with assistance from the brigade staff, this challenge was quickly overcome. The administrative section, comprised of one NCO, performed in-processing procedures on more than 70 soldiers in two months. Additionally, logistical issues arose. All new soldiers had to be equipped with organizational clothing and individual equipment (OCIE), but the 114th had deployed with a shortage of OCIE. With assistance from the brigade S4 and the Fort Hood Central Issue Facility, this problem was also quickly resolved.

An unforeseen benefit of AC and RC integration is the value in recruiting. AC soldiers have learned about the advantages of service as a citizen soldier, while RC soldiers have discovered the appeal of serving their country on a full-time basis—some have even applied for active duty status. AC soldiers are getting a unique opportunity to work with the RC soldiers, gaining the knowledge, expertise, and maturity of their counterparts. AC soldiers assigned directly out of advanced individual training are sharing the latest tactics, techniques, and procedures, thus improving the overall combat readiness of the 114th. Myths about the skills and the capabilities of RC soldiers have been dispelled. They know that they will make a lasting

impression on AC soldiers, influencing decisions they will make throughout their military careers.

The full integration of the 114th has proved a great success but has posed new challenges for leaders. NCOs who were normally only responsible for soldiers for a few hours, as was the case with weekend drills, were now responsible for soldiers at all times. Quick honing of leadership skills—counseling, drill and ceremony, and physical fitness training—under the watchful and supportive attention of the 89th Military Police Brigade helped ease the transition. Additionally, the support of the command sergeant major and S3 staff sergeant major helped the NCOs allay their concerns.

The RC is a family in the truest sense. RC units often include several members of immediate or extended families; the 114th even has two sets of identical twins. With a ratio of 50 percent AC to 50 percent RC in May 2003, it was necessary to form two Family Readiness Groups (FRGs)—one at Fort Hood and one in Clinton. Volunteers to staff the Fort Hood FRG were readily available and willing.

The War Eagles also had to address the integration of new soldiers into their culture. An important aspect of their closeness is their social connection outside of the military setting. The RC soldiers admit having had reservations about this integration, but the AC soldiers have blended smoothly into this cohesive unit. The esprit de corps of the 114th has increased and remains strong at Fort Hood.

Looking to the Future

The Army benefits from professional and personal bonds developed in this extensive concept of unit integration—a system for building partnerships. AC and RC soldiers have adapted to challenging circumstances by taking the Total Army concept to a new level. They have used the strengths of each type of force to overcome the weaknesses of the other and accomplish their mission. As the Army confronts an unpredictable and dangerous security environment, innovative and professional soldiers—found in both the AC and RC—will be needed to protect and defend the United States.

First Lieutenant Davis is the executive officer of the 114th Military Police Company. In his civilian job, he is the assistant football coach at Hinds Community College, Raymond, Mississippi.